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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA; DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: SENEGAL: MAURITANIA DEMARCHE DELIVERED

REF: A. BERNICAT - 6 AUG 2008 E-MAIL (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. STATE 84915

Classified By: Ambassador Marcia Bernicat for reasons 1.4.(b & d).

[1](#)1. (C) Following a brief discussion (ref A) regarding the coup in Mauritania with Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, Ambassador Bernicat delivered the demarche contained in ref B on August 11. Wade strongly doubted the utility of Senegal issuing a public statement condemning the coup, claiming: a) the Africa Union statement spoke for the individual members states and provided sufficient condemnation (particularly in the African context in which so many leaders have benefited from coups), and b) doing so could hamper Senegal's continued role to help broker a resolution within Mauritania. Wade further noted that, as current head of the Organization of Islamic Conference, he would have to temper any statement he made, given the reticence of many in the Arab world to publicly condemn the coup. He urged instead that all concerned parties should now look for a way forward to resolve the situation in Mauritania.

[1](#)2. (C) Wade agreed it would be preferable to find a resolution consistent with the Mauritanian constitution, but thought the U.S. position, which he characterized as a refusal to accept an election organized by coup leader General Aziz precluded a peaceful option to resolving the crisis. Wade claimed that Aziz, a proud nationalist whom he knows well, would not allow Abdallahi to return to power, nor was he likely to agree to let a multilateral organization arrange elections. The real dilemma, Wade argued, was how to break the continual cycle of coup d'etats in Mauritania. He suggested the cycle will not be broken until Mauritania finds a way to bind its three disparate ethnic groups and multitude of "tribes" into a true national identity. Wade views the latest coup in this larger context, even though it has unseated an elected (though predictably ineffective in Wade's opinion) government, rather than a dictator. He was optimistic that Aziz, discussions with the diplomatic community and preservation of Mauritania's remaining democratic institutions are indicators the coup leader is searching to find a way to turn over power quickly and in a constitutional manner.

[1](#)3. (C) When pressed to suggest what a constitutional way forward that did not include restoring the former government to power, Wade contended that the next in line to succeed the president, the current head of the national assembly and his deputy, would not be sufficiently trusted to guide the country to its next elections because both are

afro-Mauritanian and too closely associated with Abdallahi's dictatorial predecessor. Wade suggested the Mauritani-ans could benefit instead from giving tribal leaders a formal voice in the government, such as by reformulating the Senate.

While acknowledging that this solution is not within the bounds of the current constitution, he posited that doing so could form the basis of a more durable national identity.

14. (C) Comment: President Wade made clear that his first concern is the instability he is monitoring on both Senegal's northern and southern borders and the role he can play to broker a resolution in the case of Mauritania, and forestall a coup (septel) in Guinea-Bissau. (FYI - Interior Minister Tidiane Sy subsequently underlined these concerns during the Ambassador's August 12 courtesy call.) Wade leaves Senegal on August 14 for his annual holiday and physical check up in Switzerland, but assured he would remain engaged on the situations in both countries.  
BERNICAT